

**world  
suicide  
prevention  
day** 10 September

awareness  
event  
host guide



## About this publication

This guide has been developed to assist Queensland organisations and individuals who are considering hosting an awareness activity as part of World Suicide Prevention Day.

The publication has been developed by Roses in the Ocean, Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention and the Queensland Mental Health Commission. It draws on information from a number of organisations including the International Association for Suicide Prevention, Suicide Prevention Australia, Mindframe, Lifeline and the Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention.

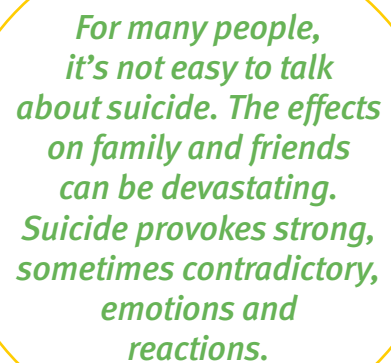
# Taking steps

Suicide is a challenging and complex issue. There is no single solution, service or initiative that will reduce suicide and its impact. It requires all of us to play a role and share responsibility to support those at risk, their families and communities.

Suicide prevention encompasses a range of interventions, including health promotion, early intervention, crisis support and ongoing support for people experiencing suicidal thoughts and behaviour, as well as supporting families and communities impacted by suicide.

If we are to bring suicide out of the shadows, encourage people to talk about suicide with a focus on help-seeking and finding solutions, learn about suicide prevention and connect with each other to save lives, we must ensure that discussions are safe and based on accurate information that leads to people feeling empowered.

**That is the purpose of this guide.** It is a resource for individuals and organisations interested and willing to engage with their community on the issue of suicide to help reduce stigma and encourage help-seeking behaviour.



*For many people, it's not easy to talk about suicide. The effects on family and friends can be devastating. Suicide provokes strong, sometimes contradictory, emotions and reactions.*

## Suicide touches us all

Close to a million people each year die by suicide worldwide, making suicide among the most prominent of international health issues.

There were 2,864 deaths possibly by suicide in Australia in 2014 – 2,160 men and 704 women. Suicide is the leading cause of deaths among Australians aged between 15 and 44 years. In Queensland, there were 648 recorded cases of suicide in 2014 (*Source: 2014 Causes of Deaths, Australian Bureau of Statistics*).

Beyond the statistics, suicide leaves profound emotional, social and economic impacts for families, friends and communities. Suicide challenges us to do as much as possible to prevent these events and reduce harm.

While not all suicides are preventable, increasing individual and community capacity and resilience, and supporting individuals and communities at risk to seek and receive help can reduce the number of people taking their lives.

# World Suicide Prevention Day

World Suicide Prevention Day is an international awareness day observed on **10 September** each year to provide a focus for commitment and action to prevent suicide. The International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) collaborates with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Federation for Mental Health to host World Suicide Prevention Day.

For community organisations and individuals committed to preventing suicide, this annual awareness day is an opportunity to share a message of hope in the community. Events and activities organised by volunteers occur in local communities across Australia.

It must be emphasised that World Suicide Prevention Day is about managing risk and avoiding harm. The information contained in this guide will help organisations and individuals to prepare for careful discussion and provide appropriate support and information to get connected. It's not about raising money, it's about raising hope!

A list of resources and contacts for other organisations is included at the back of this guide to help you collaborate and access the information you need.

## Stemming the tide of suicide

Roses in the Ocean works to empower communities to change the way suicide is understood, spoken about and ultimately prevented.

To engage communities in suicide prevention, Roses in the Ocean taps into the wisdom of people with a lived experience of suicide, so people can learn ways to protect themselves and their loved ones.

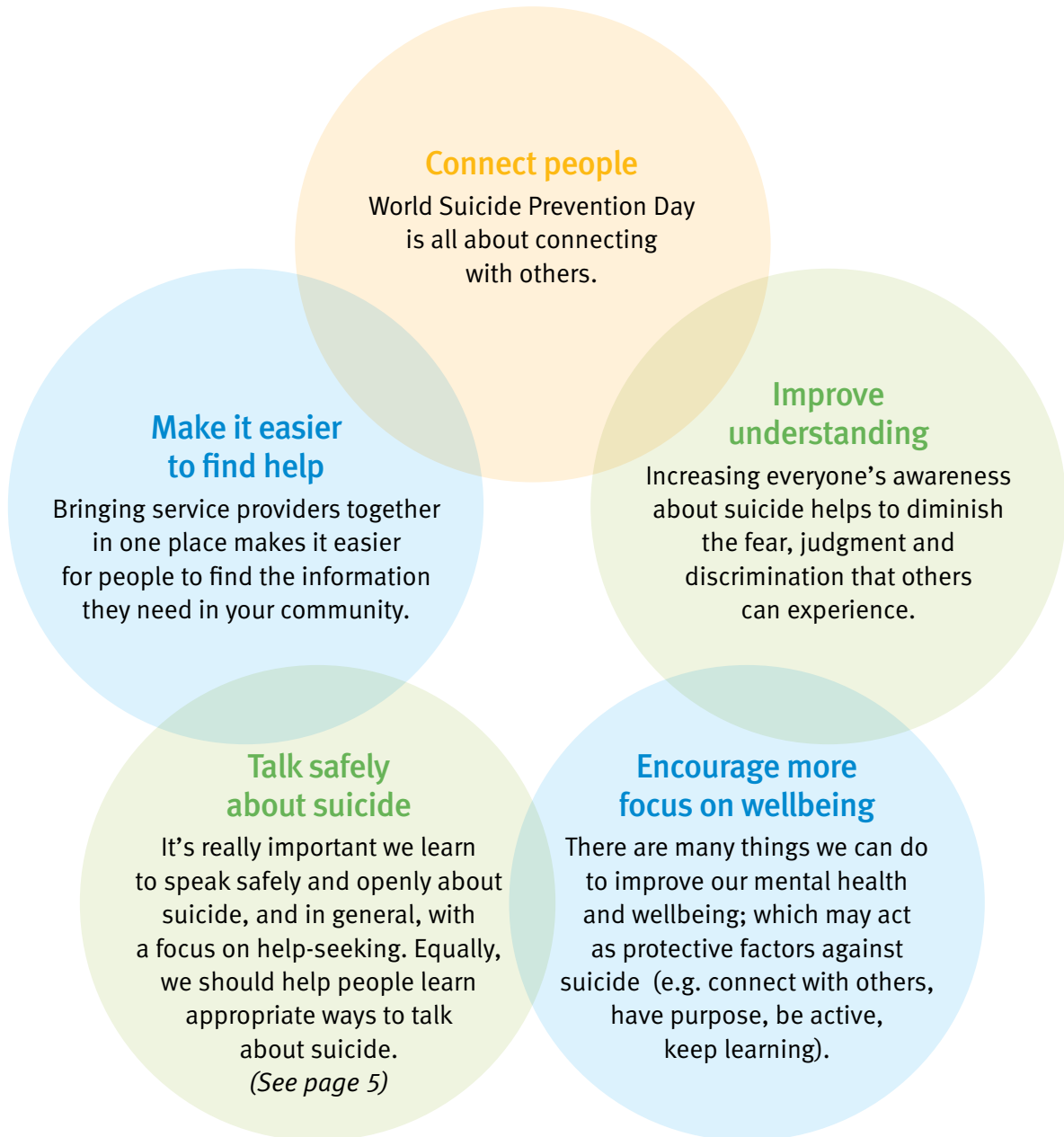
As the host of World Suicide Prevention Day events at a number of locations in Queensland, the group uses its symbolic rose to encourage people to reach out, connect and care. A major public event is held in Brisbane's Queen Street Mall and features local service providers, entertainment by local musicians and speakers with lived experience.

For further information or to be part of a Roses in the Ocean World Suicide Prevention Day event, visit <http://rosesintheocean.com.au> or email [info@rosesintheocean.com.au](mailto:info@rosesintheocean.com.au)



Roses in the Ocean  
stemming the tide of suicide

By drawing attention to suicide prevention you can:



To find out more about World Suicide Prevention Day activities around the world, go to the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) web page [www.iasp.info/wspd/index.php](http://www.iasp.info/wspd/index.php)

To find out more about what's happening in Queensland and in other states, go to [www.wspd.org.au](http://www.wspd.org.au)

# Planning and preparation

Before committing to hosting or being involved in a World Suicide Prevention Day event or activity, it's important to give proper consideration to these matters:



**Think about your personal readiness.** Talking about suicide, sharing insights, learning about research, policy and programs can be an incredibly rewarding, healing and hopeful experience. But it can also be emotionally and mentally draining and can impact on your own physical and emotional wellbeing. The way this affects you can also change over time and depend on other things – the ups and downs occurring in your life. Hosting a World Suicide Prevention Day activity requires energy, enthusiasm and hard work. Caring for yourself and others in your group is really important to prevent stress and burnout.



**If you plan to host a community event or activity, it is essential to create a safe environment.** Creation of a safe environment means being sensitive to any potential risks associated with public events that involve discussion of suicide, and responding in ways that provide access to readily available and user-friendly helping and support services.



**Having qualified counselling support and referral information on-hand is vital.** Organisation of the event must involve identification of local and other helping and support services, which should be promoted to the community throughout the event where appropriate. It is best to seek assistance from health professionals in your area. *Refer to the Resources section in this guide for information on where to access help.*



**While there is a general need to raise awareness of suicide prevention and to engage people in discussions, there should be an identified purpose for your event or activity and an understanding of the target audience.** For example, is the purpose to raise awareness about risk factors, to tell people how to get involved in suicide prevention, or to promote services and initiatives? Be clear about what you are seeking to communicate.



**The way suicide is talked about is important.** While conversations can inform and educate people, if not handled appropriately they may also upset or isolate some individuals. Some people may feel distressed and need support right away. This is why you must be attentive and vigilant towards people engaging with you, and why you should have a qualified counsellor at your event.

# Talking about suicide

It is important to speak safely about suicide to increase awareness and understanding in our communities, to encourage people to seek help, and to tap into the valuable insight and wisdom that comes from engaging with people.

You do not have to be a professional counsellor to talk about suicide. All you need is to have the patience to listen with an open heart and an open mind.

*When talking about suicide you must know where to refer people for professional and crisis support.*

## Finding the right words

People who are vulnerable or bereaved by suicide can be particularly impacted by language.

When talking about suicide, avoid discussing detailed descriptions of methods or locations of suicide. Also consider cultural protocols such as not naming an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person who has died.

To promote a positive shift in the terminology used to discuss suicide we recommend the following guidelines, taken from *A Guide for Speaking Publicly About Suicide*, by Mindframe, 2011, and available online at [www.mindframe-media.info/for-mental-health-and-suicide-prevention/mental-health-and-suicide-prevention-resources](http://www.mindframe-media.info/for-mental-health-and-suicide-prevention/mental-health-and-suicide-prevention-resources).

Do say	Don't say	Why?
'non-fatal' or 'made an attempt on his/her life'	'unsuccessful suicide'	To avoid presenting suicide as a desired outcome or glamorising a suicide attempt
'took their own life', 'died by suicide' or 'ended their own life'	'successful suicide'	To avoid presenting suicide as a desired outcome or distressing people bereaved by suicide
'died by suicide' or 'deaths by suicide'	'committed' or 'commit suicide'	To avoid association between suicide and 'crime' or 'sin' that may alienate some people
'concerning rates of suicide'	'suicide epidemic'	To avoid sensationalism and inaccuracy

Source: Adapted from Mindframe, *A guide for Speaking Publicly About Suicide*, 2011.

# Special considerations

As part of planning a World Suicide Prevention Day awareness event or activity, there are a number of special considerations which may influence your approach:

## Do no harm

It is important to think about your audience and how information might be interpreted. Even something as straightforward as statistics can be interpreted differently. For some, hearing about the number of people to attempt or die by suicide will encourage them to learn more and get involved. While for others, associating a number to a loved one may be interpreted as minimalistic and de-humanising.

Remember to choose your words carefully when talking about suicide. Avoid judgemental or sensationalist language, and ensure that the critical importance of having a life lost, or a loved one lost, is central to your efforts (and the efforts of the community).

## Readiness and capacity

Suicide is complex and there can be as many different responses as there are people in your community. It may take time for a community to feel ready to join the effort to build a suicide-aware and safe community.

Feeling 'ready' and 'capable' involves having knowledge and awareness of evidence based strategies and responses, as well as linkages to those who can provide advice and support around the suicide prevention ideas suggested by your community.

## Overcoming stigma

There can be a harmful stigma associated with suicide that can impact on people with lived experience of suicide by damaging social relationships and creating barriers to avenues for help. This stigma can and should be challenged and reduced in a safe and compassionate way.

Careful planning and appropriate information and resources are pre-requisites to addressing the stigma that may be associated with suicide.

*Refer to the organisations listed in the Resources sections to find material that can help address this issue.*



## Mental illness and suicide

Many people who experience mental illness do not display suicidal thoughts or behaviour and not everyone who takes their own life can be said to be mentally ill.

Generally speaking however, it is commonly accepted that a mental illness can significantly affect a person's ability to interact successfully with their family, friends, workmates and the broader community; can cause extreme distress and disability; and can lead to isolation of, and discrimination against, those affected.

Involving local mental health professionals, counsellors and community health staff in World Suicide Prevention Day activities can provide a pathway to broader health and wellbeing discussions for people in your community.

## Understanding suicide in culturally and linguistically diverse communities

Culture shapes people's views of suicide; different cultures understand suicide and suicidal thinking in different ways.

The best strategy for working with people from different cultures is to have someone from the same culture(s) there with them, to help translate the language as well as the various cultural differences that may exist.

It is vital that services and support are culturally sensitive and tailored to the diverse needs of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, since cultural understandings about stress, mental illness and suicide can be misunderstood.

## Impacts of suicide

The profound effects of suicide are often likened to a stone thrown into a lake which results in ripples that radiate and have a multiplier effect, impacting the lives of any number of individuals—from family to friends, colleagues, clinicians, coronial staff, volunteers of bereavement support services and other associates—who can feel intense and conflicted emotional distress in response to a death of this kind.

Such impacts represent a significant health concern, given that people bereaved by suicide are at increased risk of developing adverse physical and mental health problems, including complications to pre-existing health conditions.

Those impacted may also experience a heightened risk of suicidal ideation, behaviours and attempts, particularly if appropriate, on-demand systems of support are either limited or lacking, and/or individuals experience other compounding adverse life events.

Special consideration and support for people bereaved by suicide is an essential part of World Suicide Prevention Day.

# Hosting World Suicide Prevention Day in the workplace

Providing information at workplaces is an important part of creating a suicide-safe community. Most deaths by suicide are among people of working age. Suicide is the leading cause of death for men aged 25 to 44 years and women aged 25 to 34 years.

You can raise awareness of suicide prevention at your workplace by hosting a World Suicide Prevention Day event, such as a morning or afternoon tea with your colleagues.

Ensure that support service information is available for those who may want to reach out for help. This could include employee assistance program information, or information about telephone and online counselling and support services.

## Engaging workplaces in World Suicide Prevention Day

There are many creative ways for employers and workplaces to participate in World Suicide Prevention Day and support the wellbeing of employees.

Heads Up provides individuals and businesses free tools and resources to help create mentally healthy workplaces that support wellbeing. To find out more go to [www.headsup.org.au](http://www.headsup.org.au)

Some of the organisations that participate in World Suicide Prevention Day in Queensland include Roses in the Ocean, the Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention (AISRAP), Lifeline, Mates in Construction, Standby Response, Open Minds, Headspace, Gay and Lesbian Welfare Association, Queensland AIDS Council, Bahloo Womens Youth Centre, Gallang Place and Talk Suicide.

# Personal stories

## Suicide Prevention Lived Experience Speakers Bureau

Suicide is a sensitive and emotional topic for many people in the community. You may wish to consider including the voice of survivors in your World Suicide Prevention Day activity.

Suicide Prevention Lived Experience Speakers have a ‘lived experience of suicide’ and are trained to talk safely about their experience to:

- improve the community’s understanding of suicide
- correct myths and stereotypes about suicide
- reduce fear, shame and stigma
- encourage people to seek support if they are experiencing suicidal thoughts or if they are concerned about someone.

The Suicide Prevention Lived Experience Speakers Bureau is a program developed and delivered as a collaborative effort of Suicide Prevention Australia and Roses in the Ocean.

The Speakers Bureau delivers training and administrative support to trained volunteer speakers – Lived Experience Representatives – who speak at workplaces, community groups and organisations on the importance of knowing how to give help and how to get help to prevent suicide.

To find out more or to request a speaker, email [livedexp@suicidepreventionaust.org](mailto:livedexp@suicidepreventionaust.org)

# Tips for hosting a community event

## Have a clear purpose

It is very important that every event has a clear message and purpose.

1. Raise awareness of and give information about suicide prevention
2. Connect people to crisis and support services
3. Give people confidence to have a conversation about suicide.

## Steps to follow

- Form a small group to help organise the event
- Choose a venue where people will feel comfortable and safe and ensure you have permission from the venue owner or appropriate authority
- Invite other local service providers to take part (such as those in the health, mental health, social or community services sectors), perhaps by setting up an information stall, organising an activity or providing information material
- Ensure you have enough volunteers and support staff on hand at the event
- **Counsellors or other qualified support people must be present**
- Ensure speakers and content are appropriate and be prepared to manage challenging comments or emotional responses
- Ensure that information provided is culturally appropriate and inclusive by considering the language used, the way the issue is discussed, and whether community leaders should be present
- Determine whether local media will be invited and plan messages
- Promote your event using flyers, posters, media releases and social media

#WSPD

#suicideprevention

#livedexperience

@RosesinTheOcean

@SuicidePrevAU

@Qld\_MHC

@aisrap

*Refer to the  
Resource section  
for links to templates  
and additional  
checklists*



## Role of the media

Your local media are an excellent channel to let people know about positive mental health messages and suicide prevention activities as part of World Suicide Prevention Day.

Dealing with media also presents an opportunity to help educate journalists on the appropriate reporting of suicide. Guidelines developed by Mindframe encourage responsible and helpful communication and media reporting on suicide deaths, and on suicide prevention activities.

*Refer to the Resource section to find the Mindframe media guidelines online.*

# Resources

Roses in the Ocean is a grassroots not-for-profit group hosting a range of World Suicide Prevention Day activities in Queensland, in addition to their own events and fundraising.

Roses in the Ocean provides free resources to help anyone plan and organise a World Suicide Prevention Day event. You can use the resources to run an event in partnership with Roses in the Ocean, or you can adapt them for your own event if you wish. Download the resources from <http://rosesintheocean.com.au>.

- World Suicide Prevention Day poster
- Letter inviting other local service providers to participate in your event
- Letter requesting support from local businesses
- Letter seeking support from local elected representatives
- Fact sheet template of national counselling services  
(*can be customised to include local service providers also*)
- Community Event Organiser Checklist
- Event running sheet template
- Notes for MC template

## Additional resources

[www.iasp.info/wspd](http://www.iasp.info/wspd)

International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) hosts the World Suicide Prevention Day resources and information.

[www.griffith.edu.au/health/australian-institute-suicide-research-prevention](http://www.griffith.edu.au/health/australian-institute-suicide-research-prevention)

Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention

[www.suicidepreventionaust.org](http://www.suicidepreventionaust.org)

Suicide Prevention Australia (SPA) is the national peak body for suicide prevention.

<http://rosesintheocean.com.au>

Roses in the Ocean hosts World Suicide Prevention Day events in Queensland and offers a range of resources and templates to host Roses in the Ocean events.

[www.conversationsmatter.com.au](http://www.conversationsmatter.com.au)

**Conversations Matter** resources developed by the Hunter Institute of Mental Health offer practical information and suggestions for holding a variety of conversations around suicide.

[www.mindframe-media.info/for-media/media-resources](http://www.mindframe-media.info/for-media/media-resources)

Mindframe has prepared a guide for media reporting of suicide.

# Help and support services

## National 24/7 crisis services

**Lifeline** 13 11 14

**Suicide Call Back Service** 1300 659 467

**MensLine Australia** 1300 78 99 78

### **Kids Helpline**

1800 551 800 (24/7 crisis support)

or [www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)

## National support services

### *General support*

#### **Lifeline**

[www.lifeline.org.au/Get-Help/](http://www.lifeline.org.au/Get-Help/)

#### **Suicide Call Back Service**

[www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au](http://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au)

#### ***beyondblue* support service**

1300 22 4636 or email/chat at [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

#### **SANE Australia Helpline**

1800 18 SANE (7263) [www.sane.org](http://www.sane.org)

#### **Standby Response Service**

[www.unitedsynergies.com.au/program/standby-response-service](http://www.unitedsynergies.com.au/program/standby-response-service)





PO Box 13027  
George Street  
Brisbane Qld 4003

Phone: **1300 855 945**  
Email: [info@qmhc.qld.gov.au](mailto:info@qmhc.qld.gov.au)  
[www.qmhc.qld.gov.au](http://www.qmhc.qld.gov.au)



**Roses in the Ocean**  
stemming the tide of suicide

PO Box 84  
Wilston Qld 4051

Phone: **1300 411 461**  
Email: [info@rosesintheocean.com.au](mailto:info@rosesintheocean.com.au)  
<http://rosesintheocean.com.au>